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International Convention
on the Elimination
of all Forms of
Racial Discrimination

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION
OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
Fifty-seventh session
31 July - 25 August 2000

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES
PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION

Concluding observations of the Committee on the
Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Holy See

1. The Committee considered the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth periodic reports of the Holy See, due on 31 May 1994, 1996 and 1998 respectively and submitted in one document (CERD/C/338/Add.11), at its 1425th meeting (CERD/C/SR.1425), held on 17 August 2000. At its 1433rd meeting (CERD/C/SR.1433), held on 23 August 2000, it adopted the following concluding observations.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee notes the submission of the report of the Holy See which followed the general guidelines for the presentation of States parties' reports. The Committee is encouraged by the constructive dialogue it had with the delegation and the positive reactions to the suggestions and recommendations made during the discussion.

3. The Committee notes that the unique structure and nature of the State party may limit the directness of the measures that can be taken to fully implement the Convention.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee notes with satisfaction that the laws and teachings of the Catholic Church promote tolerance, friendly coexistence and multiracial integration and that Pope John Paul II has in a number of speeches openly condemned all forms of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia manifested through racial tensions and conflicts around the world. The Committee welcomes the solemn request of His Holiness for pardon for past acts and omissions of the Church which may have encouraged and/or perpetuated discrimination against particular groups of people around the world.

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5. The information given by Vatican Radio and Osservatore Romano (the Vatican's daily newspaper) in promoting the principles of the Convention is welcomed.

6. The Committee welcomes the efforts of the State party and encourages it to continue its active role in promoting conflict prevention and resolution as well as dialogue between and within religions. In particular, it notes the positive initiatives undertaken by the State party to promote peace and bring an end to ethnic conflicts. The State party is also encouraged to continue its initiatives in this regard.

7. Appreciation is expressed for the contributions made by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People through, inter alia, declarations and programmes of action to promote non-discrimination against refugees and migrants in various parts of the world. In this context, the Committee notes the efforts undertaken by the State party to promote the rights of the Roma populations.

8. The Committee expresses its appreciation for the role of the Catholic Church in promoting education, particularly in developing countries. The Committee further welcomes the opening up of Catholic schools to children from different religious creeds as well as the promotion of tolerance, peace and integration through education. The Committee notes with satisfaction that in many countries where the majority of the population is non-Christian, Catholic schools are places where children and young people of different faiths, cultures, social classes or ethnic backgrounds come into contact with each other.

C. Concerns and recommendations

9. The Committee recommends that the State party implement, as appropriate, the Convention, and invites it to provide in its next periodic report information on the relationship of article 4 to Canon Law and Penal Law in Vatican City State.

10. The Committee notes the clarification outlined in paragraph 106 of the report concerning the involvement of ecclesiastics, against the precepts of the Catholic Church, in the genocide in Rwanda. The State party should cooperate fully with the national and international judicial authorities in connection with prosecutions relating to the Rwanda genocide.

11. While welcoming the extensive statistical information provided in the State party's report concerning the membership and administrative structure of the Roman Catholic Church as well as Catholic educational establishments globally, the Committee invites the State party to provide data on the inhabitants and administrative structure of Vatican City State.

12. It is noted that the State party has not made the declaration provided for in article 14 of the Convention, and some members of the Committee request that the possibility of making the declaration be considered.

13. The Committee recommends that the State party undertake all appropriate measures to ensure that the report and these concluding observations are widely distributed to the public. The Committee further recommends that the State party's next periodic report be an updating report and that it address the points raised during the consideration of the report.